

CHAPTER 8 – FIRE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

8-1. Purpose. This chapter establishes the policy for fire management activities, including contracted services, at USACE Civil Works projects.

8-2. Glossary.

a. Debris Pile. An aggregation of any combustible material collected to concentrate fuel hazards and to facilitate disposal through removal or prescribed fire.

b. Fire Suppression. All work and activities connected with fire extinguishing operations, beginning with discovery and continuing until the fire is completely extinguished.

c. Fuels. All combustible material within wildlands and the wildland/urban interface including vegetation (living and dead) and structures.

d. Incipient Stage Fire. A fire in the initial or beginning stage which can be controlled or extinguished by portable fire extinguishers, shovel, a class II standpipe or small hose system without the need for protective clothing or breathing apparatus.

e. On-site Manager. The individual designated by the District Commander as his or her authorized representative for specific O&M field projects. This person is normally referred to as the Operations Project Manager but in the past may have been referred to as the Operations Manager or Facilities Manager.

f. Pre-suppression. Fire activities undertaken in advance of a fire to ensure more effective fire suppression, including overall planning; recruitment and training of fire personnel; procurement and maintenance of equipment and supplies; fuel treatment; and creation, maintenance, and improvement of a system of fuel breaks, roads, water sources, and control lines, etc.

g. Prescribed Fire. A fire applied in a knowledgeable manner to wildland fuels on a specific land under selected weather conditions to accomplish predetermined, well-defined, management objectives. Also referred to as prescribed burn, controlled burn/fire, or Rx burn/fire.

h. Vegetative Fuels. Natural fuels (duff, grasses, trees, etc), including live and dead materials, found in natural settings that are capable of burning. Also referred to as wildland fuels.

i. Wildfire. An unplanned and uncontrolled fire spreading through vegetative fuels, at times involving structures.

j. Wildland. An uncultivated, natural area, occupied by any variety of vegetation.

k. Wildland Fire. A term used to describe a type of non-structural fire that occurs in the wildland. This is an inclusive term that includes both wildfire and prescribed fires.

l. National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG)

8-3. Policy. It is the policy of the Corps of Engineers to perform integrated fire management activities on Civil Works projects in a manner that provides for the safety of the environment, the public, and personnel. A primary component of fire management is the use of fire to accomplish resource objectives identified in the Operational Management Plan (SEE APPENDIX Q, EP1130-2-540). Paragraph a. below describes the restrictions placed on contracts to pay for wildfire suppression services and exceptions to the restriction. Paragraph b. describes two options available for prescribed burns. Paragraph c. describes appropriate fire management activities that are acceptable for interagency agreements or contracts.

a. As a general rule, the Corps may not pay for wildfire suppression services if such services are required by the state or local law to be provided without additional charge. Where a state or local firefighting organization is required by law to cover a particular territorial area and to respond to wildfires without direct charge to the property owners, this duty extends to federal, as well as non-federal, property owners within that territorial area. Therefore, the Corps may not contract for wildfire suppression services which it would be legally entitled to receive in any event, nor may it reimburse a fire department for additional cost incurred in wildfire suppression on federal property. In those limited territorial areas where such laws do not exist, the Corps may enter into wildfire suppression contracts to facilitate the protection of property from wildfire. On-site managers will need to check with district Office of Counsel on a case-by case basis to determine those limited areas. Although generally the Corps may not contract directly with a fire department for the provision of firefighting services, section 11 of the Federal Fire Prevention and Control Act of 1974 allows fire departments to seek from the Federal Emergency Management Agency reimbursement of direct expenses incurred in fighting a fire on federal property.

b. Prescribed fire management activities to protect and enhance forest and wildlife habitat will be identified in the OMP. Prior to implementing a prescribed fire, a prescribed burn plan shall be prepared (SEE APPENDIX R, EP1130 –2-540). To accomplish wildland fire management for prescribed burns (to include debris piles) the project on-site manager has two options. The project on site manager can use project personnel to implement prescribed burns provided these employees are appropriately trained and equipped as described in EP-1130-2-540, Section 8-4. The project on site manager can also initiate an action for the Corps to enter into a contract for performance of these services subject to compliance with all applicable Federal procurement laws and regulations. In either of these options, fire management plans will provide for Corps personnel and public safety, include fire management strategies, tactics, and alternatives; address values to be protected and public health issues; and be consistent with resource management objectives, activities of the area, and environmental laws and regulations. A prescribed burn plan with required components identified in the OMP will be developed for

each planned burn. The purpose of a prescribed fire management program is to enhance proficiency while reducing risk to Corps and contract personnel. While the on-site manager may maintain a small cadre of appropriately trained and equipped personnel, it is not an endorsement to organize into a national fire fighting team, nor is it an encouragement to participate on such teams at Corps expense. Personnel responsible for development and oversight of burn plan implementation will be properly trained to applicable NWCG standards through Federal, state, or private organizations.

c. Fire management planning, preparedness, prevention, fire use, restoration and rehabilitation, and prescribed fire operations, monitoring, and research, and education will be conducted on an interagency basis with the involvement of other Federal, Tribal, and state land management agency partners whenever practicable. To facilitate the protection of property from fire, through planning and prevention activities or to accomplish wildland fire management activities (less wildfire suppression), the Corps may enter into contracts with a recognized state, local or private organizations for performance of these services subject to compliance with all applicable Federal procurement laws and regulations. Wildland fire management activities conducted on outgranted lands will be governed by conditions contained within the relevant real estate instrument, or by separate agreements, which clearly define the Corps role.

d. Corps personnel and public safety is the first priority. All fire management plans and activities must reflect this commitment. All Corps personnel participating in fire suppression or prescribed burning activities shall be properly trained and/or certified, and have a Position Hazard Analysis (PHA) on file. An Activity Hazard Analysis (AHA) will be completed before beginning wildland fire activities involving a type of work presenting hazards not experienced in previous project operations or where a new group of project employees/contractor is scheduled to perform the work. The NWCG has prepared recommended training guidelines. Training sources include Federal and state fire management agencies, colleges and universities or other qualified private organizations. Records of such training and/or certification will be maintained in official personnel files. Retraining/re-certification needs of personnel shall be determined on an annual basis, and training shall occur in accordance with state or Federal certification programs. See Chapter 8 of EP 1130-2-540 for additional guidance.

e. Implementation of a fire management program as contained in this regulation is voluntary. The policy focus is on giving on-site managers the discretion to become directly involved in wildland fire management. These guidelines are applicable to those projects that implement a wildland fire management program.